

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6127

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As of January 23, 2018

**Title:** An act relating to improving the management of the state's halibut fishery.

**Brief Description:** Improving the management of the state's halibut fishery.

**Sponsors:** Senator Van De Wege.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/22/18.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to recommend and use all appropriate means to advocate that recreational halibut fishing season structures provide fishing opportunities on consecutive days in a given week if multiple days are to be scheduled.
- Establishes a \$5 fee for a halibut catch record card.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

**Staff:** Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

**Background:** Halibut Fishery Season Setting. Halibut seasons are set through an annual process conducted at the international, federal, and state level. The International Pacific Halibut Commission sets harvest limits for all regulatory areas, when are shared under a plan developed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council and implemented through federal and state rules. DFW solicits public input into the season setting process and conducts fishery monitoring and enforcement activities.

Catch Record Cards. Under current statutes and DFW rules, catch reporting is required for some recreational fisheries. In most cases, there is no charge for an initial catch record card. However, there is a statutory fee of \$11 for a duplicate catch record card and a statutory fee of \$7.50 for a catch record card endorsed for Puget Sound crab when purchased with a combination fishing license. By rule, DFW requires catch reporting on sturgeon, salmon steelhead halibut, and Puget Sound crab.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Summary of Bill:** In its role making recommendations as part of the halibut season setting process, DFW must recommend and use all appropriate means to advocate that recreational halibut fishing season structures provide fishing opportunities on consecutive days in a given week if multiple days are to be scheduled.

A \$5 fee is established for a halibut catch record card, with funds received to be used for monitoring and management of recreational halibut fisheries.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The catch record card portion of the bill will help DFW determine how many people are fishing for halibut. Some fishers from the Olympic Peninsula have requested that the season structure be built around fishing on consecutive days in a week. This is a conversation worthy of having, although this particular approach may not be the answer. The data issue is a real one, as some are concerned DFW is not using available data to manage the fishery. Washington has some unique areas that make halibut opportunities available to populations that would otherwise have trouble participating in that fishery.

OTHER: DFW has not previously taken a position on season dates, as it tries to convene public meetings and pass along the feedback it receives. DFW does not currently use catch record card information for in-season management. Instead, it collects real time data and sends it to the federal government. There have been discussions among stakeholders about this concept, however.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Kevin Van De Wege, Prime Sponsor; Randy Jones, Venture Charters; Scott Sigmon, Coastal Conservation Association.

OTHER: Michele Culver, Department of Fish & Wildlife.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.